THE MEASURE
A JOURNAL OF POETRY

Poems by Wallace Stevens, Leonora Speyer, John Macy, and Myla Fletcher — — — — — —

"Fauns At Prayer" by Leolyn Everett, and "Eight More Harvard Poets," Reviewed by Pitts Sanborn — — — — — — — — —

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New England Verses

I

THE WHOLE WORLD INCLUDING THE SPEAKER

Why nag at the ideas of Hercules, Don Don?
Widen your sense. All things in the sun are sun.

II

THE WHOLE WORLD EXCLUDING THE SPEAKER

I found between moon-rising and moon-setting
The world was round. But not from my begetting.

III

SOUPE AUX PERLES

Health-o, when cheese and guava peels bewitch
The vile antithesis of poor and rich.

IV

SOUPE SANS PERLES

I crossed in '38 in the *Western Head.*
It depends which way you crossed, the tea-belle said.

V

BOSTON WITH A NOTE-BOOK

Lean encyclopaedists, inscribe an Iliad.
There's a Weltanschauung of the penny pad.

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VI

BOSTON WITHOUT A NOTE-BOOK

Let us erect in the Basin a lofty fountain.
Suckled on ponds, the spirit craves a watery mountain.

VII

ARTIST IN TROPIC

Of Phoebus Apothécaire the first beatitude:
Blessèd who is his nation's multitude.

VIII

ARTIST IN ARTIC

And of Phoebus the Tailor the second saying goes:
Blessèd whose beard is cloak against the snows.

IX

STATUE AGAINST A CLEAR SKY

Ashen man on ashen cliff above the salt halloo,
O, ashen admiral of the hale, hard blue . . .

X

STATUE AGAINST A CLOUDY SKY

Scaffolds and derricks rise from the reeds to the clouds,
Meditating the will of men in formless crowds.

XI

LAND OF LOCUST

Patron and patriarch of couplets, walk
In fragrant leaves heat-heavy yet nimble in talk.

XII

LAND OF PINE AND MARBLE

Civilization must be destroyed. The hairy saints
Of the North have earned this crumb by their complaints.

XIII

THE MALE NUDE

Dark cynic, strip and bathe and bask at will.
Without cap or strap, you are the cynic still.

XIV

THE FEMALE NUDE

Ballatta dozed in the cool on a straw divan
At home, a bit like the slenderest courtesan.

XV

SCÈNE FLÉTRIE

The purple dress in autumn and the belfry breath
Hinted autumnal farewells of academic death.

XVI

SCÈNE FLEURIE

A perfect fruit in perfect atmosphere.
Nature as Pinakothek. Whist! Chanticleer. .

Floral Decorations for Bananas

WELL, nuncle, this plainly won't do.
These insolent, linear peels
And sullen, hurricane shapes
Won't do with your eglantine.
They require something serpentine.
Blunt yellow in such a room!

You should have had plums tonight,
In an eighteenth-century dish,
And pettifogging buds,
For the women of primrose and purl,
Each one in her decent curl.
Good God! What a precious light!

But bananas hacked and hunched.
The table was set by an ogre:
His eye on an outdoor gloom
And a stiff and noxious place.
Pile the bananas on planks.
The women will be all shanks
And bangles and slatted eyes.

And deck the bananas in leaves
Plucked from the Carib trees,
Fibrous and dangling down,
Oozing cantankerous gum
Out of their purple maws,
Darting out of their purple craws
Their musky and tingling tongues.

How the Constable Carried the Pot Across the Public Square

A SLASH of angular blacks
Like a fractured edifice
That was buttressed by blue slants
In a coma of the moon.

A slash and the edifice fell.
Pylon and pier fell down.
A mountain-blue cloud arose
Like a thing in which they fell,

Fell slowly as when at night
A languid janitor bears
His lantren through colonnades,
And the architecture swoons.

It turned cold and silent. Then
The square began to clear.
The bijou of Atlas, the moon,
Was last with its bedroom leer.

—*Wallace Stevens.*

Rust, Dust, Fountain Water

IRON VIRGIN

(Nürnberg Altschloss)

SHE stands,
A portly burgher's lady,
Within her tower;
And her heart is many knives.

I think she mourns their rust
As the drab woman in the shawl drones on,
Tells of the passionate, edged clasp,
Drips candle-grease . . .
Sluggish reminder of that other dripping.

Her face is the portrait of an honest Nürnbergerin
Who never missed going to Mass;
And at the corners of her carved smile
A dimple deepens in the candle-light
At this jest of the Middle Ages . . .
Jesus! Maria! How dull the town has grown!

SAINT IN PETTICOATS

(Rothenburg Museum)

NO longer looking down from Mary's altar
On moving lips and hands,
Stripped of her brocaded gown she stands
Unseen
Among the huddled treasures of the town;
The saint Christine.

Yet there is splendor in her dim undress
And much of hallowed mien,
That petticoat of parchment-pages torn
From the old book of hymns
And worn
Sprightly as any crinoline
About her sacred limbs.

For where were richer garb than this,
In whose wide folds I trace Gregorian chant
Clear-writ on line and space?
Gloria in excelsis! Gloria! Gloria!
—How poor seem silk and lace.—
Ecstatic words that priestly mouths have mumbled,
Now dried in death
And tumbled
To sanctimonious dust
And ritual of rust.

Time alone knows
How the doll-saint has drooped from Mary's side
To this dull litter of dubious curios;
Or why the candle's waxen glitter
Wavered to dusk
So bitter.

Still is she saint!
And I may worship here if I so will,
Lean toward the faded frill
And hum
The fadeless canticles,
Magnificat, Venite, Te Deum,
Lift high the heart to the high, faithful note
Still choiring on Christina's petticoat.

BAGPIPE PLAYER

(Nürnberg Fountain)

HE plays his little tune in water.
Each note spurts from the bronze pipe-holes,
The piper plays
Four sprays
That mix and make a chord their own
Splashing to music held by the bowl of stone.

—I know this tune of Pan's, played
First in some deep German wood,
Where hoofed and hairy things drew near
To hear,
And nymphs were unafraid.—

Hans Sachs and Dürer passed this fountain,
And Peter Fisher, Luther's sculptor friend;
Passed . . . to their worthy end.
But did they note the Goat-god's godless ditty?
Or did the dripping little knave
Play drier tunes for them
In the staid street of the red-gabled city?

Two Moon Whims

MOON HUNTER

THERE is a wild bird
Over the town
That none may bring down.

After it, heart, my howler!
Breaker of leashes,
Lusty retriever,
Up at the cry of the fowler!

We who have hunted the skies
Together . . .
Bring back one shining feather!

HEROD

TODAY at noon
The crescent moon,
A jaunty arrow in the sky,
Too light to fall, went floating by.

But now it slinks
Away, and sinks,
A dim and dreadful scimitar,
Red with the life of some sweet star.

—*Leonora Speyer.*

Cosmic Scandal

WE were burrowing worms in the dust,
Unwitting of darkness or day.
We touched; and no other worm thrust
His head or his tail in our way.

We were fish in the infinite sea;
We played hide-and-seek in the deep.
All the ways of the waters were free,
And in caverns of coral was sleep.

We were birds on the breast of the wind
In a poise or a riot of flight.
No other bird peeped that we sinned
When we dropped to our nest for the night.

We were beasts in a tangle of trees,
And I loved you and bit till you bled.
Foes prowled, with claws itching to seize.
It was not from ourselves that we fled.

From the earth and the sea and the air
We have grown into woman and man.
Shall the ultimate beautiful pair
Be less moral than when they began?

Vigil

PUT out the yellow light,
The dawn rides up the skies.
I have outwatched the night
Beside the bed of torture where she lies.
And I shall watch all day . . . .
Oh, I would watch alway,
If I could keep
In her the life that falters toward eternal sleep.

Well?

MY heart loves her who has a wise kind smile;
My mind loves her who has a cruel lure;
My body loves them both. Once in a while
I think my body's judgement the most sure.

Numbers

THING most wonderful under the sun,
How we two became as one.
But sweeter deeper mystery,
How we two grew into three.

Passage

WHAT man would pass again on roads once passed,
Relive one day of the most radiant days,
Retrace the mountain path whose summit plays
With sunsets, plough again the waves of vast
Seas overcome, or wish tomorrow cast
Like one in the long sequence of the ways
Pursued by pitiless time that never stays,
Wherethrough we travail hoping for the last?

Not to the kiss of a remembered breast,
The faded charm, the lover's sad delight,
Would any man return with willing lip,
Nor from the stream of life with ardor dip
The self-same water, be again the guest
Of hours that left him grateful for their flight.

The Poet

I HAVE composed the sun to my belief,
And strung the stars upon the thread of thought,
Confined the racing winds to whispered words,
And housed the universe in a woman's heart.

—John Macy

Tell Us, Charon!

OVER the River Styx!
Charon, tell us where we go;
Charon, tell us what you know.
Love! Embrace! Today be merry!
Tomorrow we cross Charon's ferry.
What lies hidden in the mist?
Heed you lips that would be kissed?
Take today! Today be merry!
Tomorrow we cross Charon's ferry.
Charon, tell us where we go;
Charon, tell us what you know,
Beyond the River Styx.

—Myla Fletcher

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ACTING EDITOR: PITTS SANBORN

After Arcetri

Fauns at Prayer, by Leolyn Louise Everett. Brentano's, New York.

EVERY one of us barbarians who has seen and loved Florence—and who of us with eyes to see has less than loved!—ought to be grateful to Leolyn Louise Everett for her *Hills of Arcetri,* which gives us the color, the music, the tone of the Tuscan scene from that lovely pedestal above the Arno valley to the south which is Arcetri. Now comes Miss Everett with her second volume, attuned to a title of arresting witchery, *Fauns at Prayer.*

If every flower were a song
And all the birds were mute,
With blossoms would I strew your path
And bind your silver lute.
If every flower were a song
And gardens were aflame,
I'd teach the violets to hymn
The accents of your name.
And then, with tender tragic hands
I'd spread your bloom above
The graves of all those silent ones,
The birds who died of love.

This is the keynote of the volume in its fancy, gay and tender, and its spontaneous ease. An overexacting reader may not escape a suspicion that a little less of gracious improvisation, a little more of drastic revision, would give the book the finer edge of an invulnerable facture. Still, one would be loath to sacrifice in the pedantic

interest an iota of its unpremeditated freshness. Here is verse that has always the charm of flowing from an unlabored impulse, a charm especially poignant in these days of an infinite poetic drudgery and torment, which for the most part delivers the heaving, sterile mountain of a very lame and tiny mouse.

Miss Everett writes with only the compulsion of the irresistible lyric urge that is within her. Her imagery is tinged with whimsy, her music knows various modes and falls. The *Fauns at Prayer* pray oftentimes in Italy, but that is accident; their abiding altar stands in the umbrageous and unbounded realm where fancy holds an everlasting sway.

—Pitts Sanborn

Cameos from Mycenae

A Little Anthology of Very Short Poems from the Magazines of 1921, Compiled by Rolfe Humphries. Done by the Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

WHAT remains, after all, of human endeavor? Fragments; fragments of philosophies—old paradoxes out of time—and fragments of sculptured things immersed in sound which men call poems—not longer poems, which are similar fragments beautifully linked—but those tiny units of verse, perfect, sudden things, completed fragments, which even in miniature may mirror the universe.

And then, too, something of the eternal epigram is in them.

Landor's "Past ruined Illion Helen lives" is the enduring example of all these—his cameo from Mycenae.

And now, adequate and inadequate, here in this choicely built, brief book, we have proofs that the poets are still chipping—still singing to produce the finished fragment.

Here, bowing in facetious farewell, is Lord Dunsany; and F. P. A. wrapping up real tears in flippant laughter; here are starry names, Edna Millay, Sara Teasdale, Elinor Wylie; and here among her four is Lydia Gibson's

JONAH

Throb of the engines, all night long,
Throb of the engines, gentle and strong,
Beating like the heart of a harnessed whale
Pushing through the sea, nosing through the gale.
I lie in the darkness, half awake,
And feel the great body throb and shake,
Feel the mighty engines' reassuring strength,
And fall asleep in the whale at length.

A very graceful gesture this, of Mr. Rolfe Humphries.

—Kenneth Slade Alling

Voices from the "Yard"

Eight More Harvard Poets, Edited by S. Foster Damon and Robert Silliman Hillyer. Brentano's, New York.

NORMAN CABOT, Grant Code, Malcolm Cowley, Jack Merten, Joel T. Rogers, R. Cameron Rogers, Royall Snow, and John Brooks Wheelwright are the eight poets whose verse is included in the new Harvard anthology. All are young. Messrs. Cabot and R. Cameron Rogers are even undergraduates still. The book is interesting. But this easy generalization, which applies in one way or another to nearly everything, is appropriate to this book particularly because of its variety.

About Mr. Cabot, who, being a C, leads off this alphabetic dance of the Cambridge bards, there is a really challenging swagger as very seriously indeed he struts out to a quotidian round that proves anything but quotidian in his envisaging. For instance, Mr. Cabot pays down two dollars for a railroad ride, and this is what it means to him:

A feast of life it was. For what, indeed,
Is life but motion, motion life; and, so,
Such sense of care-free, devil-engendered speed,
Deep drafts of life with no corrupting woe,
A Bacchanalian orgy of all that reed,
Pen, brush, or sculptural instrument can show?

This rhapsodic promenade recalls to the historically-minded the old-time 'Frisco Chinaman's definition of a cable car: "No pullee, no pushee, all hellee." And Mr. Cabot has the courage of a *cliché* that long antedates the obsolescence of the cable car. But the impetuous courage with which he hurls off, as if hot with newness, the tritest sort of imagery has an impressiveness of its own.

Grant Code is quite another affair. But, then, Grant Code is not an undergraduate; he is a teacher of English. There is nothing at all startling about the matter of his poems—

> How shall we live, how shall we draw our breath
> Under the stagnant grey of a city sky?

is quite typical of the Codistic yearnings,—but he writes with a sensitive feeling for the quality of words and a scrupulous technic.

Malcolm Cowley indulges in anything from the strictest metre and rhyme to verse so "free" that it isn't verse at all. But what Mr. Cowley has to say is decidedly arresting, and he says it readably. The first poem in his series, "Chateau de Soupir: 1917" (perfectly strict in form, by the way,) I can commend with enthusiasm as one of the very best of the innumerable "poems" that have come out of the World War. The "temporary queen Odette" and her amorous senator are etched with infinite relish and zest.

Jack Merton is neat of manner, and fanciful. Joel T. Rogers, with a racy echo of the balladists, contributes longer pieces. The humanities and music enrich the poems of R. Cameron Rogers, and a feeling for the wide English country. How delightful the last three stanzas of "After the Great Wind"!—

> Familiar winds there are, as shepherds know,
> That wheel above the southdown flocks at noon,
> And those that in the twilight come and go,
> In deep-cleft lanes a-gossip with the moon.
>
> But this was alien, and its frenzy stirred
> Our stoic trees to clamorous unrest,
> Pelting this sky with some barbaric word
> That seemed half battle-slogan and half jest.
>
> But even now it passes Finisterre;
> Now are its voices strident over Spain.
> Let us return: the land is quiet here,
> And over us the constellations wane.

There is no defter passage in the book than the first four lines of Royall Snow's "Music Room Duet," and John Brooks Wheelwright

has some amusing whims set forth smartly in a current fashion. He sees this, for instance, in a Boston statue of Alexander Hamilton—

> He has the stodgy dignity of a tobacco Indian
> With his pompous calf stuck out after the Bourbon manner;
> but his shoulders, pressing forward . . .
> show us Hamilton, the genius of the Yankee
> Ship of State . . .
> Hamilton,
> the untroubled wisdom that speaks behind the mask of Washington,
> Hamilton, voice of Sovereignty.

Not the least significant part of this volume is the preface contributed by Dorian Abbott.

—*Pitts Sanborn.*

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